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ABSTRACT

Presidents of colleges and universities are, and should be, well aware of pressure on them and their boards of trustees to reexamine and change the structure of these organizations, and the distribution of authority within them. Since the response affects our presidential role and the nature and content of presidential leadership, the author suggests several related matters that seem to merit consideration. The ideal structure arrangement for governance, in the author's view, would be one that accommodates presidential leadership based on board appointment with a process by which that leadership can receive student and faculty acceptance. Presidents must be wise enough to find ways to solicit responsible input in policy decisions at the governance level, retaining their ultimate authority to decide. They must also develop ways of allowing faculty and students to express their feelings about proposals before final decisions are made. Moreover, these larger, college-wide policy decisions must rest on involvement and decisionmaking at localized levels within the organizations of the various constituents. Once policy has been set, however, the administration of that policy must be left to the managers--if for no other reason that that is what they are paid to do. Thus the crisis of higher education is not only in numbers and dollars. More realistically, it is one of imagination and leadership that must be solicited from all voices in the college community. (Author/PG)

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MODELS OF GOVERNANCE

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PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: STRUCTURE OR STYLE?

In our continuing effort to present views on the changing role of the college president, the *Management Forum* presents George N. Rainsford's address to the Management Division Chicago seminar for college presidents held in May 1974. Dr. Rainsford is President of Kalamazoo College.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP and MECHANISMS OF GOVERNANCE

George N. Rainsford

Presidents of colleges and universities are, and should be, well aware of pressure on them and their boards of trustees to re-examine and change the structure of these organizations, and the distribution of authority within them. Since the response affects our presidential role and the nature and content of presidential leadership, I suggest several related matters which seem to merit consideration.

First, our sins of omission. We have come through a period of great and spectacular changes in higher education—in enrollment, finances, buildings, budgets, student aid, and public visibility. Almost as impressive, however, are the things that have not happened. It is one of the ironies of modern higher education that we have gone through this period of great growth without capturing the imagination and enthusiasm of our undergraduates and without changing the behavior of faculties or administrations, or the structures of our institution.

In a period of revolutionary change in the scope of higher education and in the resources available for its use, there has been little change in the process of education itself. Faculty in the main are still interested in teaching their subject fields rather than in teaching students. Education is conceived of as a 'putting in' and not a 'pulling out' process, with the student the object of the teaching and not the subject of the learning process. The curriculum, overwhelmingly oriented toward graduate school or pre-professional training, packaged in unrelated, airtight compartments known as disciplines, tends to be standardized and full of requirements. It is spiritually impoverished at a time when young and old alike are looking to intellectuals for answers to great moral and ethical questions. Liberal arts colleges are loose federations of departments, with the dean and president concerned first with the advancement of departments and not with the liberal education of undergraduates. We have not moved far from "the baronies of knowledge that are creating the new ignorance" against which Woodrow Wilson protested as a university president in the early 1900's.

In seeking an explanation for these educational deficiencies we come upon a fascinating piece of mythology—that in the fine tradition of the melting pot our American institutions are internally homogeneous, there is wide acceptance not only of basic missions but of the means by which they are to be executed, there is wide agreement on the distribution of resources and on priority objectives, and the president's role is simply to lead in a ceremonial way this coherent and unified enterprise down the bright path to the future. However carefully this mythology is preserved, even the most casual observer must admit that the American house of intellect as represented by colleges and universities is a house divided. Each of its constituents claims different but equally compelling missions, and its visible historical roots have grown out of separate commitments to different functions of education.

The first European universities appeared in Italy during the Middle Ages and were communities of students given legal authority for such purposes as bargaining with the faculty or negotiating with townspeople. The early medieval institutions of France and Italy were student-run and even student-owned. Teaching was the reason for their existence. While initially the teaching was of professional subjects, the student-oriented teaching function of the university finally was perfected in the great classical English institutions which served in large measure as the touchstone of our Colonial colleges.

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The Germans introduced another function of the university in the research emphasis which was and still is essentially faculty-oriented. This emphasis of the great German universities produced not the quiet, scholarly Oxford don known for his wide reading, wit, and great wisdom, but the stern and imposing Herr Docktor Professor, known only in his classroom or laboratory. His career was dedicated to careful honing of the sharp edge of a particular element of scholarship.

A distinctly American contribution came with the land-grant colleges, community and service oriented and, therefore, in many respects administratively dominated. Contemporary administrators of colleges and universities by and large tend to be more concerned than students and faculty with the problems of community relations, sources of funding, meeting public manpower requirements, and applying the results of research to human needs.

Here then are three major elements of the college or university in close contact with each other, yet each holds an essentially different view of the university's functions. When to these three are added trustees, parents, friends—and in the public sphere, legislators and taxpayers—it is amazing that the institutions function at all. Thus much of the current distress in higher education results from differences in perception of the mission of the institutions.

To understand the current academic scene one must also realize that the several constituencies, in addition to claiming different functions and different priorities of program, also have divergent ideas about proper organizational structure. Messrs. Jencks and Reisman in *The Academic Revolution* describe the faculty-oriented revolution which was responsible for the character, direction, and style of higher education over the last twenty years. This revolution in the role of the college and the responsibilities of the faculty could be described as a conservative revolution of the right. The student counter-revolt which followed in the 60's was more visible, more compressed, noisier, and more publicly upsetting but not more real. The casualties of the first revolution were the undergraduates and graduate students. The casualties of what John Fisher has called "the student counter-revolution" were administrations already victimized by the faculty revolution.

An additional piece of mythology needs to be exposed. Because educators deal with the world of ideas, it is presumed that their institutions are open, flexible, and susceptible to change. Although faculty tend to be liberal, they often are hard-shell conservatives on matters of university reforms, and colleges and universities are among the most conservative institutions in our society. A recent report from the Carnegie Foundation quite properly pointed out that of all professional groups, faculty can best be described as colleague—not customer—oriented. The "customers" of scholars too often are other scholars. Thus, change within our institutions comes, if at all, like the pearl in the oyster, only out of sheer irritation.

Yet change has come and both students and faculty are more deeply involved in the decision-making process. The simple division of labor by which faculty taught, students learned, and administrations administered as the representatives of boards of trustees is no longer characteristic. The American college has become an organizational paradox. The external and symbolic trappings are those of the hierarchical bureaucracy while the essence of its internal life and culture spring from a much more individualized and horizontally based system. This blurring of constituents' functions has led to the creation of what Clark Kerr describes as "a kind of elaborate veto system through which every important decision must be filtered before it can be enacted."

Moreover, the governance structure of most colleges and universities has come to reflect patterns of actual performance rather than the broader purposes spelled out in our basic documents on mission dealing with development of the individual and service to society. The organizational unit with which faculty are most frequently identified is the department, and when faculty become involved in the governance process, they sit on college or university bodies as historians, physicists, or English professors. Neither organizational nor governance structures represent liberal education, general education, life development of students, or community service.

The consequence of this lack of basic agreement among the various constituencies as to mission and function leads also to disagreement about questions of governance and management, policy-making and implementation. What little forward planning is done is by and large on an incremental basis and on the assumption that the current curriculum and departmental structure will remain as the plan's basic underpinnings. Governance tends to be either a compromise based on negotiation among diverse constituencies or, in the extreme, identified primarily by its absence.

Mission and Governance

"But," says the typical tired president, "we are muddling through. Students are being taught, bills are being paid, lawns are being cut, and now as we move toward the end of May and the beginning of June, students are being graduated out into society with our 'Good Housekeeping seal of approval' on their foreheads. Why worry about ponderous matters of governance and management?"

They are important, in my view, for several reasons. As John Millett has said, "The fact of conflicting ideas... within an academic community about objectives and programs makes the structure of governance, management and leadership all the more vital. To some extent these processes must resolve objectives and adjust conflict or the viability and existence of colleges and universities as enterprises will be threatened." Indeed, they will be threatened in two ways. Either they will cease to function because internal conflicts make them inoperative, or they will continue to operate as now with increasing inability to reach their true objectives—the education of students and service to society. Or worse, the issues of governance and mission currently debated by state and federal politicians will be settled for us by people outside our institutions.

Some say we must settle the matter of objectives and purposes and then create governance and organizational structures to reflect those purposes. Others say we need to restructure governance and organizational systems so as to identify the right group to settle the question of objectives and mission. No matter what course an institution selects, the stimulus necessary to make either of these propositions work is presidential leadership.

We have taken an important first step by recognizing that the college organization itself is an appropriate subject for study and change. Faculty, students, and administrators who desire vital institutions must give attention and care to the institutions themselves. For too long, faculty—and now students—have seen the college only as an instrument to meet their particular needs.

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The demand for complete autonomy or domination by any of the sub-populations within the campus community is healthy neither for that group nor for the college. There must be a vision of the college as having needs of its own—needs derived from its history, from the realities of its here and now, and from the requirements of its future.

Thus, our major question, given differences in mission and competing aims among administration, faculty, students and the other publics of our institutions, is as Peter Drucker has said, "to find the right thing to do, not to find the right way to do things." Some believe that the distribution of power and authority (therefore of governance and to a certain extent management) must be spread more horizontally to incorporate elements of student and faculty participation. They have accepted this as a 'given,' then asked how best to do it. The answer for them is the college or university council with substantial legislative powers and membership from students, faculty, administration, and staff. My impulse, however, is to go in the opposite direction.

Increased communication is necessary, but authority and responsibility in governance as well as in management must be more sharply focused. I believe we should move to clarify and redefine the existing division of functions rather than to blur them further. The president should be a leader in the old-fashioned sense but subject to review and recall if he can't do the job. A council's dilution of his authority and accountability weakens his capacity to lead, and tends to make him a consensus manager. Leadership does not come from committees unless there is a much higher lever of consensus about goals and objectives than is current.

My second reservation about the council idea concerns the complete inequality in accountability which it implies. Even assuming one can fire a committee, how is it held responsible for a disaster that results from wrong judgment? The president and administrative staff have no security and can be fired; but the faculty have tenure, and it would be unthinkable to expel a student for voting the wrong way. If there is to be shared authority there must also be shared accountability. If there is to be accountability it must be personal, yet neither students nor faculty are organized to accept that responsibility. Moreover, the whole point of shared authority is in its exercise, yet many faculty and students see the sharing of power as an end in itself. A mechanism of governance, in my opinion, is no more meaningful without a commitment to govern than a mechanism for communication is an end in itself if there is nothing worth communicating.

Still another problem in reconstructing campus government arises from the fact that some faculty and many students reject the idea of representation on the theory that no one can be adequately represented by anyone other than himself. There is a wide-spread feeling that the board cannot represent the public, the president cannot represent the institution, the faculty senate cannot represent the faculty, nor the student government the student. Democracy is the rule, not representative government, with the consequence that a council's recommended action would have to be ratified by the constituent groups. Faculty and students alike would reject as improper Edmund Burke's admonition to the voters of Bristol in 1771 when he said, "Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment. And he betrays instead of serves you if he sacrifices it to your opinion."

Since governmental structure must be efficient in addition to protecting the interests of its constituents, it is well to remember that the main business of students is to learn, of faculty is to teach, and of administrators is to administer. I was once an adviser to a model community of students at the University of Colorado who wished to design their own structure of governance. So much time was taken up by the simple decisions as to who was going to cook breakfast and who was going to clean up—who was going to do the work of the world—that no energy was left over for intellectual endeavor.

Finally, in the making of decisions it is necessary to accept the fact that someone will lose. The whole judicial system is based on the idea that someone loses. But within our educational institutions we have forgotten how to lose, and the idea of the university or college and council implies the notion that everyone wins.

Models of Governance

Given the differences within our constituencies, I see three possible governance models if shared authority and responsibility are to be assigned. The first possibility is a consensus arrangement represented by the town meeting or college council with the president as manager. I fear that judgment in this arrangement might be exercised at the level of the lowest common denominator. The second possibility is a bargaining or negotiating model, which is essentially a political process, with the president as principal negotiator. The third possibility is allocation of authority and responsibility vested in the president who is obligated to recognize and respect differences among his constituents. The role of the president here is perhaps that of an orchestra leader who is clearly in charge but recognizes the differences in talents and functions among the players.

My preference is clearly for the last model. It is important, however, to stress the need for consultation before and during the decision-making process. If our governmental structure is to reflect the consequences of academic innovation, change, and reform we must learn to value a kind of transaction or conversation across constituencies within the college. This communication process will require openness in communication, direct intellectual and emotional confrontation, a problem-solving posture, ability to integrate institutional with individual needs, willingness to recognize and deal with conflict wherever it occurs, and risk-taking when the consequences are still unclear. Leadership must be decentralized, and all in the academic community must have some commitment as advocate-educators with a responsibility to initiate and not simply to respond.

It is important that there be responsible student and faculty organizations from which opinion emerges. The institution, and more particularly the president when he wants a reliable opinion, must not confuse the voices of a few activists on any given issue with a majority expression of either students or faculty. Equally important, communication between the organizations and the president must be a two-way street. Care in expressing to the president the concerns of students and faculty must be matched by care in representing the president's views to the constituents.

Many decisions will be shared either formally or by an informal consensus no matter how much questions about what to decide become entwined with questions about jurisdiction to decide. Certain decisions, however, by their nature may not be shared. Some recommendations will have to be acted on only by student organizations, some by faculty organizations, some by ad-

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ministrators, and some by trustees. Self-government is a hard business involving a high level of self restraint and concern for others. This can be learned only in practice. Lord Acton, the British political economist, has said that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." It is also true, however, that in the twentieth century, powerlessness can corrupt as absolutely as can absolute power. If faculty and student organizations are to act responsibly, they need to be more involved in decisions of an all-college nature in which they have an interest such as budget, planning, and personnel. It would, however, be absurd to take the time of any all-college council or faculty committee to deliberate on matters primarily of concern to students.

Giving students and faculty a more effective voice in the management of our institutions does not, however, require administrators to abrogate their stewardship. At times the president will simply have to go into his office, close the door and decide 'yes' or 'no.' The measure of his accountability under these circumstances is threefold. His constituents have the right to know that he has the best interests of the institution chiefly if not exclusively in mind, that he has honestly and seriously considered all the alternatives, and that he had good reason for deciding as he did. He should hold any student or faculty representatives to the same standards in recommending a course of action to the president.

The ideal structural arrangement for governance, in my view, would be one that accommodates presidential leadership based on board appointment with a process by which that leadership can receive student and faculty acceptance. As the Assembly on University Goals and Governance in 1971 stated in its document on governance, "Good governance depends on a reasonable allocation of responsibilities that makes the structure of authority credible for all these groups. The educational mission of a university is most likely of accomplishment if there is a division of authority, a sharing of information, and a well defined system of accountability." The important distinction here is that these arrangements should be consultative rather than legislative. Presidents must be wise enough to find ways to solicit responsible input in policy decisions at the governance level, retaining their ultimate authority to decide. They must also develop ways of allowing faculty and students to express their feelings about proposals before final decisions are made. Moreover, these larger college-wide policy decisions must rest on involvement and decision-making at localized levels within the organizations of the various constituents. Once policy has been set, however, the administration of that policy must be left to the managers—if for no other reason than that is what they are paid to do.

The effectiveness of a president in accomplishing institutional objectives is in significant measure a question of his style. Leadership is personal, not corporate or by committee. The president is an executive in the sense that he executes plans made by himself and others, but he is also the leader with powers of initiation, and significant control over the reward system and appointments. He is the ceremonial head of the institution as well as its organizational head, a matter of no small importance since with the highly centrifugal force of most institutions, the need for a ceremonial coming together of the total community is great.

Thus the crisis of higher education is not only in numbers and dollars. More realistically it is one of imagination and leadership which must be solicited from all voices in the college community. Each of these voices has a different message but all have the same urgency to be heard. They ask what are our ultimate goals, what means do we have of achieving those goals, what is our ordering of priorities, by what criteria do we determine priorities, and who has the responsibility for decision-making?

Colleges in the United States are mechanisms for the inheritance of Western culture, and for the stimulation of human development. They preserve, enhance, enrich and transmit learning. But as social organisms they also go through stages of biological evolution. They have evolved out of certain experiences of the past, and I am confident they will respond in changes of organization and structure to the needs of the future.

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